

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Mayor Willie W. Herenton Unveils Crime Reduction Plan**

***Mayor asks for tax increase to fund the hiring of 650 additional police officers.***

MEMPHIS, TN (Sept. 28, 2006) Mayor Willie W. Herenton earlier this afternoon announced that he is turning up the heat in the war on crime in Memphis. "Crime has reached an unacceptable level in our city and I take full responsibility and accountability to do something about it," the mayor stated to media and local officials at a press conference in city hall. "We have an outstanding police director in Larry Godwin and a great police force, but at the end of the day, the citizens hold me accountable and responsible."

Mayor Herenton's aggressive plan to reduce violent and property-related crime in Memphis calls for hiring an additional 500 police officers to patrol Memphis streets, along with an additional 150 officers to patrol the city's public schools. The cost is an estimated \$50 million to hire the officers over the next two years. "It's a new day and more resources are needed to fight crime effectively," the mayor said.

"While I acknowledge this is an election year, the public safety needs of this community are so great that I cannot allow an upcoming election to deter me from making the necessary request for a property tax increase," the mayor stated. "It's time to take back our streets and I believe the citizens of Memphis are willing to pay whatever is necessary to make their city a safer place for them and their families to live, learn, work and recreate."

In addition to the mayor's request to the Memphis City Council for a 50 cent property tax increase over the next two years, the crime abatement plan recommends the Memphis City Council to place a referendum before the citizens that exempts law enforcement personnel from the current residency restriction that requires them to live within the city limits. The plan also recommends a reduction in the minimum education requirement for law enforcement applicants from a minimum of two years of college to requiring a high school diploma instead.

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Regarding the timing of his announcement, the mayor emphasized a deliberate approach to the city's escalating crime rate. "Over the past several months, I have been very deliberate and rational in my approach to assess and analyze the crime situation in Memphis," Herenton said. "I personally researched and analyzed the crime statistics and am convinced that we need more resources to tackle our crime problem," he added.

The mayor also plans to send Police Director Godwin and a team of law enforcement personnel to New York City to observe how the nation's largest city fights crime. "In an effort to follow best practices, we've concluded that New York City is an excellent city where we can study law enforcement technologies, techniques and research."

In the meantime, the mayor and Godwin have outlined immediate actions to tackle crime that include heighten officer visibility. "I am going to request the Memphis City Council to immediately allocate \$2 million to cover law enforcement's overtime costs for the next year," he said. "This will allow us to substantially increase police visibility and make an immediate impact on crime."

A long-term goal of the crime abatement plan is to empower the Memphis Police Department to fund operating costs through partnerships with the private sector. "New York and other cities have established foundations to raise funds that supplement their police force's operating costs. We hope to mirror these efforts in Memphis."

Stressing the importance of accountability, Mayor Herenton and Godwin plan to track the success of the proposed heightened efforts to fight crime. "We will monitor the levels of aggravated assaults and other violent crime, along with burglaries and other property-related crime to track the effectiveness of this aggressive approach," the mayor stated. "I will keep citizens informed throughout this initiative."

For more information about the mayor's announcement, log on to the City of Memphis' official Web site at [\*www.memphistn.gov\*](http://www.memphistn.gov).

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